

## CLAIMS

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1. A method of registering a satellite telephony user terminal with a system comprising one or more earth stations for communication with said user terminal via one or more satellites; and one or more switch nodes interconnected therewith by a terrestrial network; the method comprising;
- 5 storing terminal data for each terminal indicating a switch node allocation mode for the terminal;
- receiving, from the terminal, control data which is not based upon the dialled number, specifying a switch node to be used for communication with
- 10 that terminal; and
- allocating that switch node as the node via which calls to and from the user terminal should be directed using the terminal data and the control data.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending, to the terminal, said control data to be retransmitted therefrom in future, said control data depending upon
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3. The method of claim 1, further comprising;
- determining whether said data is present, and if not;
- 20 allocating a said switch node on other criteria.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising, in a first allocation mode;

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determining the position of said user terminal; and  
allocating a said switch node on the basis of said position and that of  
the switch nodes.

- 5 5. The method of claim 1, in which the control data comprises;  
an indication of the last switch node allocated to said user terminal.
6. The method of claim 1, in which the control data comprises;  
an indication of whether the last switch node allocated to said user  
10 terminal should be used again or not.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of;  
receiving, from the terminal, data indicative of the identity of the user  
or the user terminal;  
15 determining therefrom a switch node to be used for communication  
with that terminal; and  
allocating that switch node as the node via which calls to and from the  
user terminal should be directed.
- 20 8. A method of registering a satellite telephony user terminal with a  
system comprising one or more earth stations for communication with said

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user terminal via one or more satellites; and one or more switch nodes interconnected therewith by a terrestrial network; the method comprising;

determining whether data has been received from the terminal, which is indicative of the identity of the user or the user terminal;

5 if so, operating a third switch node allocation mode comprising,

determining therefrom a switch node to be used for communication with that terminal; and

allocating that switch node as the node via which calls to and from the user terminal should be directed;

10 if not, operating a first switch node allocation mode comprising;

determining whether control data (other than the dialled number), has been received from the terminal, which is indicative of a switch node to be used for communication with that terminal and not of the identity of the user or the user terminal; and

15 allocating that switch node as the node via which calls to and from the user terminal should be directed;

if not, operating a second switch node allocation mode comprising;

allocating a said switch node on other criteria.

20 9. A method according to claim 1, in which the one or more satellites comprise a constellation of satellites in non-geostationary orbits.

10. A user terminal for a satellite communications system, said terminal being operable to transmit control data which is not based upon the dialled number, specifying a switch node to be used for communication with that terminal, said data being indicative of the identity of said switch node and not of the identity of the user or the user terminal.

11. A user terminal according to claim 10, which is arranged to receive said control data, store said control data, and subsequently to transmit said stored control data.

12. A network control component of a mobile satellite communications system comprising one or more earth stations for communication with a satellite telephony user terminal via one or more satellites and one or more switch nodes interconnected therewith by a terrestrial network; said component being operable to register a said user terminal with said system; the component comprising;

means for receiving, from the terminal, control data which is not based upon the dialled number), specifying a switch node to be used for communication with that terminal; and

means for allocating that switch node as the node via which calls to and from the user terminal should be directed.

13. The component of claim 12 which comprises one of said earth stations.

14. The component of claim 12, which further comprises one of said switch nodes.

15. A satellite system network component for performing the process of claim 1.

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